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ABSTRACT

Recent trends in full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) at the Coast Community College District to the contrary, the District should anticipate a reduction in FTE enrollment growth rates over the next few years and, perhaps, a reduction in FTE enrollments absolutely. Evidence leading to this conclusion consists of reductions in population, high school enrollment, and issued building permit growth rates as well as reduction in numbers of units enrolled in by day college students. (Author)

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ANTICIPATING CHANGES IN ENROLLMENT GROWTH

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Office of Educational Development
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CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION

SUMMARY

Recent trends in full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) at the Coast Community College District to the contrary, the District should anticipate a reduction in FTE enrollment growth rates over the next few years and, perhaps, a reduction in FTE enrollments absolutely. Evidence leading to this conclusion consists of reductions in population. high school enrollment, and issued building permit growth rates as well as reduction in numbers of units enrolled in by day college students.

In the final issue of The Junior College Research Review, dated May, 1972, John Lombardi presented an article he entitled, "Moratorium on New Junior Colleges." Dr. Lombardi points to recent predictions of continuing upward trends in enrollments in community colleges and in higher education in general. Looking at encouraging enrollment predictions and at perceived need over the next two or three decades, such agencies as the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, the American Association of Junior Colleges and the California Junior College Association all have advocated creating more junior colleges, reports Lombardi.

In his article, Lombardi takes an opposite view and calls for a moratorium not only on building new junior colleges but on erecting new buildings on existing campuses. Here are a few comments abstracted from his article.

> ...while a moratorium may be unpopular in many states, it makes sense in light of population projections, the percent of high school graduates entering college, and the declining rate of enrollment increase in the elementary and secondary schools. It is unlikely that these demographic affects on enrollment will be offset by enrollments of adults as suggested by the Carnegie Commission and others.

> Community college educators across the country were shaken by the disappointing Fall, 1971 enrollments.
>
> More than two-thirds of the 30 Northern California (community college) presidents reported, "either a decline in actual enrollment or falling short of estimates."
>
> The California experience was particularly embarrassing to the educators since they had predicted that "an unprecedented rise in enrollment awaits the opening of the Fall, 1971, school year for California's vast junior college system."
>
> Enrollments in the California elementary and secondary schools have shown either an absolute decline or a markedly reduced rate of increase. ...The declining high school enrollments of the past two or three years should have been a warning to community college administrators but most of them ignored these signs.

Lombardi concludes with a recommendation that a moratorium on new junior college buildings is in order. As he puts it, "a moratorium on new buildings is even more urgent than one on new colleges. The slowdown in enrollment, if sustained, will find many colleges with much more unused capacity than they now have."

I visited Dr. Lombardi last week in his office at the ERIC Clearinghouse at UCLA. We discussed his article and in the discussion he told me of a report he had just received from Miami-Dade Community College. According to the report, 120 some odd faculty members have been layed off this Fall semester from that institution as a direct result of enrollments falling far short of expectations. "It's quite clear" he concluded our conversation, "that higher education is no longer a growth industry."

The question that arises, of course, is "What about Coast?" Shall we expect slower growth in enrollment or even perhaps overall reduction in enrollment over the next few years?

Enrollment patterns for the last seven semesters has measured in terms of full-time equivalent students do not suggest an immediate down-turn in enrollment. Indeed, as shown in Figure I, full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) is growing apace in the district. This growth is largely the result of increased FTE enrollments at Golden West College. Growth in FTE enrollments is true for those enrolling before 4:30 p.m. as well as those enrolling after 4:30. It is also true for both the Fall and the Spring semesters although in the Spring there seems to be some suggestive evidence of a leveling off. All in all, however, our recent history does not suggest an important change in enrollment increases as far as full-time equivalent students are concerned.

But what of the future? If the prognosticators cited by Lombardi are accurate, we can expect reductions in enrollment shortly. Lombardi points out a number of reasons why enrollments might decline. Among them is the notion that student attitudes have changed; that they are no longer as interested in pursuing a college degree as they have been. There is some evidence in our district that this may be true. The average number of units enrolled for each day college student, shown in Table I, has decreased from 10.4 in the Fall of 1969-70 to 9.8 this semester. The drop in average units enrolled has been gradual, with the biggest drop recorded at Orange Coast; nine tenths of a unit. Ken Mowrey and I ruminated over this drop a couple of days ago and we observed that it represented a loss of apportionment income of approximately $300,000 for the semester.

Contrary to the day school trend of fewer units per student, evening college students are gradually increasing the number of units in which they enroll. For the district as a whole, the increase is slight: from 4.8 in 1969 to 5.0 currently. Between the decrease in average units per student shown in the day college and the increase shown in the evening college, the average number of units stayed about the same with a slight decrease for the district as a whole.

In sum, changes in student attitudes toward going to college to earn an A.A. degree in two or three years may eventually have some impact on the total FTE enrollment in the district. At the present time, the impact cannot be said to be great although there does seem to be a downturn in the average number of units per student enrolled.

Another factor to take into account is the population growth of the area served by our district. Here in Orange County, population growth is definitely slowing. In 1960, the "percentage" increase in population was 90,000 people or 14.9%. Since then, the population increase has decreased both in percentage terms and in terms of absolute numbers. In 1971 the percentage increase in population for the county was 3.4. Numerically that amounted to 48,420 people.[1]

More pertinent, however, are the population changes for the area served by our district. These are shown in Table II. Here, the population increase in 1967 is shown to be 7.8%. In 1971, that figure had dropped to 4.6%. In terms of absolute numbers, however, the population

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[1] Orange County Progress Report, Vol. 8, June, 1971, p.54

is still growing; the reduced percentage reflects a larger total population more than it reflects a reduction in amount of increase.

Still another factor bearing on the total population served by the district has to do with whether or not there is room for additional dwelling units. Table III shows building permits issued in the six cities served by our district. From 1961 through 1966, a general downward trend is quite evident. Thereafter, things pick up slightly until 1970 at which time new housing permits were reduced by almost one-half as compared with 1969. One suspects that limitations imposed by the amount of real estate available in our district sooner or later will reduce growth in numbers of dwelling units. As a result, the population will stop growing. When this will happen is anybody's guess but it is probably more likely to be sooner than later.

One of the best indicators for community college enrollment is high school enrollment. According to Lombardi, such prognosticators as Alan Cartter of New York University have called attention to population projections that show a decreasing number of high school graduates entering college between now and 1980. After that date, says Cartter, there will be an absolute decline in the number of college eligible students. In Orange County, enrollment growth rates in high schools has been dropping steadily since 1960. In that year the total increase in high school enrollments for the county amounted to 18.5% of the enrollment or approximately 7,000 students. In 1970, the same increase in enrollment amounted to only a 5.2% increase. Once again, this reduction in growth rate is more a function of increased total enrollment than of a reduction in annual increase. Each year it

would appear that high schools in Orange County increased enrollment by 5,000 to 7,000 students.[2] It's hard to say how long things will continue like this.

In summary, it's hard to predict what enrollments will be at the Coast Community College District over the next few years. Full-time equivalent enrollment over the past seven semesters suggests continued growth. Probably we should heed Lombardi's warning and look to other factors which may influence enrollment. We observe that population growth in the county and in the district is slowing down. We observe that those students attending the colleges are tending to reduce the total units in which they enroll. Building permits issued over the last decade show, for most years anyway, a gradual downward trend. Finally, the growth rates in high school enrollments since 1960 have gradually reduced although this does not necessarily mean smaller absolute increases in high school enrollments. In general, enrollment patterns for the next few semesters bear careful watching. So do other community factors such as those examined in this brief which may signal changes in enrollment trends.

It is reasonably safe to conclude, given the evidence of declining population, high school enrollment and building permit growth rates, that we should anticipate a reduction in our enrollment growth rates over the next few years. We may also do well to anticipate a reduction in absolute enrollment.

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[2] Orange County Progress Report, Vol. 8, June, 1971, p. 77

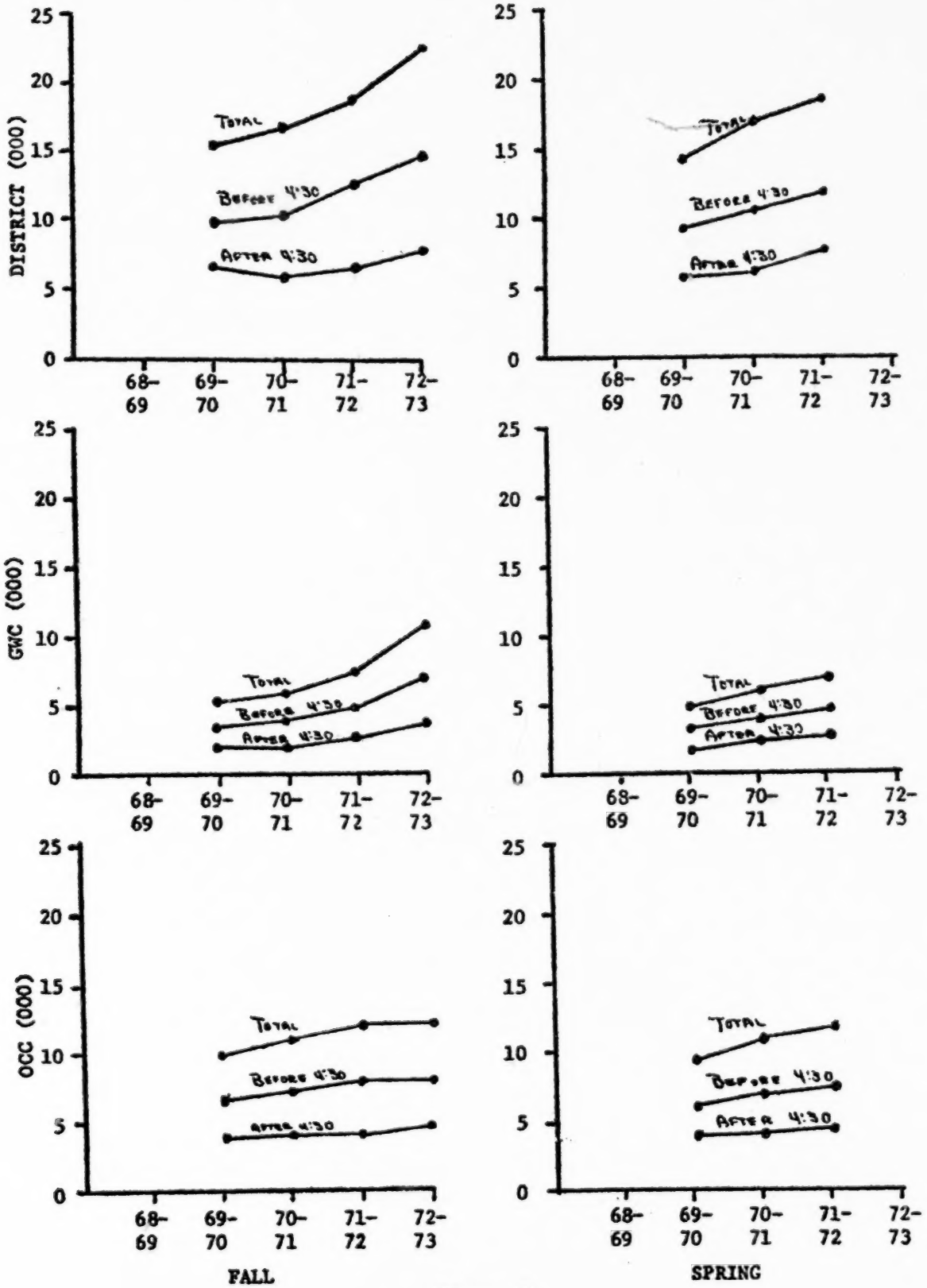

Figure I
Full-Time Equivalent
Students

	G.W.C.			O.C.C.			District		
	Before 4:30	After 4:30	Total	Before 4:30	After 4:30	Total	Before 4:30	After 4:30	Total
Fall 1969-70	10.4	4.8	7.4	10.4	4.8	7.3	10.4	4.8	7.4
Spring 1969-70	10.6	4.6	7.2	10.6	4.6	7.2	10.6	4.6	7.2
Fall 1970-71	10.4	5.0	7.6	10.2	5.3	7.7	10.3	5.2	7.7
Spring 1970-71	10.0	5.0	7.4	10.1	5.1	7.4	10.1	5.0	7.4
Fall 1971-72	10.0	5.1	7.5	10.0	5.0	7.5	10.0	5.0	7.5
Spring 1971-72	9.8	5.2	7.4	10.0	5.0	7.3	9.9	5.1	7.4
Fall 1972-73	10.0	5.1	7.5	9.5	4.8	7.0	9.8	5.0	7.2

Table I

Average Units Enrolled
Fall, 1969-70 to Fall, 1972-73

	1967		1968		1969		1970		1971	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Costa Mesa	68,340	3.2	70,300	2.9	71,000	1.0	72,470	2.1	73,220	1.0
Fountain Valley	21,300	19.0	25,000	17.4	27,800	11.2	30,580	10.0	35,560	16.3
Huntington Beach	88,620	13.0	95,460	7.7	105,560	10.5	114,140	8.1	121,420	6.4
Newport Beach	40,160	5.4	41,550	3.5	46,170	11.1	49,140	6.4	50,250	2.3
Seal Beach	19,800	7.2	20,880	5.5	22,210	6.4	24,210	9.0	25,150	3.9
Westminster	53,710	3.9	55,700	3.7	57,220	2.7	59,640	4.2	60,550	1.5
Total	291,930	7.8	308,890	5.8	329,960	6.8	350,180	6.1	366,160	4.6

Table II

Estimated Population Growth
Coast Community College District*

*Orange County Progress Report, Vol. 8, June, 1971, pp. 54-55

	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
Costa Mesa	1,531	1,788	1,855	2,039	1,289	709	379	705	433	1,269	477
Ftn. Valley	-	7	261	1,985	1,685	1,113	590	753	657	1,942	1,456
Htg. Beach	1,759	3,209	4,092	5,158	3,285	2,851	1,720	2,163	2,752	5,001	2,158
Newport Bch.	977	736	851	967	958	606	490	436	1,554	1,896	1,259
Seal Beach	76	1,148	3,171	1,930	555	350	320	422	495	699	777
Wstm.	1,071	1,519	2,102	1,746	348	334	434	476	583	643	83
Total	5,414	8,407	12,332	13,825	8,120	5,963	3,933	4,955	6,474	11,449	6,210
% Change	-	+55.3	+46.7	+12.1	-41.3	-26.6	-34.0	+25.6	+30.7	+76.8	-45.8

Table III

Building Permits
Coast Community College District*

*Orange County Progress Report, Vol 7, July, 1970, pp. 88-89; Vol 8, June, 1971, p. 89